

Onlooker's Diary

Chairman replies

FOLLOWING the letter printed in this column last week from Mr. T. Rowlands attacking Wycombe Wanderers' decision to axe the reserves, club chairman Jack Smethurst has written this reply.

"In answer to the letter from Mr. T. Rowlands published in last week's 'Free Press' regarding the decision to disband the Wycombe Wanderers' reserve side, I feel that a statement might help Mr. Rowlands and other keen supporters of the club to appreciate what the true position is.

"Although the reserve side is playing excellent football and is competing for the leadership of the reserve section the support given to the side is, and has been, almost non-existent.

"This has been the situation for the past five or six seasons and is evident throughout football, both professional and amateur, at reserve team level.

"Mr. Rowlands must be aware that the cost of running a reserve team runs into several hundred pounds each year (travelling, heating, lighting, equipment, strip, laundry etc.) and—the money is just not forthcoming.

Insufficient

"Gate money provides nothing

like sufficient income with which to run ANY side and although the parent club and the supporters club are doing everything possible (through the 2,500 Club, Sportsman's Association, tea bars, etc.) to augment the gate money, it is still insufficient to maintain the club on an even footing.

"The club is not in a position to borrow money because it has no assets. If, therefore, the club is losing money and money cannot be obtained, then the committee has no alternative but to economise, and in the present circumstances, economise drastically.

"The step which has been taken is very much regretted by everyone in the club but the committee could see no immediate alternative in the circumstances. For the few who have supported the reserve side during the recent seasons, it is intended that the first team squad shall play each Saturday and one game during the week, so that regular supporters will get one game each week to compensate.

"Replying to one or two additional points raised by Mr. Rowlands, I would like to point out that (a) Mr. Brian Lee gets no interference on team selection from the committee and (b) the

suggestion that there should be a clear out of the old brigade and that younger men with a professional approach should be brought in is easily remedied.

"He must know that three committee members retire each year. He must know, also, that for the past five seasons (at least) there have been insufficient nominations for an election to take place and three retiring members have been elected automatically.

"The whole of the committee would welcome an offer by younger members but why don't they offer themselves for election? The 'Old Brigade' is there because they want to serve football and if the younger men that Mr. Rowlands speaks of do not come forward, what is the alternative?

"I would point out that anyone offering to serve on the parent club committee or the supporters' club committee, must be prepared to give up a large slice of free time and there are not many young men, particularly young men with children, who have this time.

"They are usually, in any case, playing sport, which is as it should be. If Mr. Rowlands, or any other supporter, of the club wish at any

time to put forward any constructive suggestions which will assist the club, the committee will always be pleased to receive them.

"Finally I would like to say that the committee has accepted the responsibility of running the club. It is aware of this responsibility and is very much aware, also, that some of the decisions it takes must be extremely unpopular.

"These decisions are not taken lightly and they are taken after considering all the facts, which the public generally, is not aware of".

Against

Following Mr. Smethurst's letter Harry Bates, father of England international Paul, has written expressing his views on the matter. Mr. Bates is, of course, a member of the general committee of Wycombe Wanderers.

Mr. Bates says "I must state on behalf of four members besides myself, who fought against the vote to scrap the reserves that we were outnumbered."

He, quite rightly, points out over the years the number of great players, who have materialised through the reserve string.